Perceptions of Engaging with a Super-Strengths Approach in Elite Sport

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PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH

Raw Data Themes

I believed that I could be one of the best in the world
It’s really important for your confidence, to know I am genuinely good at something
It gives you that bit of chest back feeling, that I am good
It gives you a bit of self-importance
It’s nice knowing that actually yeah I think I am better than you at this.
There is always that inner belief in yourself
It has had a big impact on my confidence
It gave me confidence to believe I could compete at an Olympic games
The best thing about super strengths is the confidence it gives you

They see something in you and it makes you feel a bit special.
I think it gives you more confidence because someone believes in you
Knowing that you have this one thing that people see in you makes you feel good

It gives you more confidence because you’re concentrating on what you are good at
It makes you feel really good focusing on the positives.
The positivity that comes from working on strengths makes a difference.
It really makes you feel good knowing you are working on something you’re good at

Super strengths is linked to confidence as it reminds you of your edge
You know that you have something that it is better than anyone else.
If they can’t read what I’m going to do, I’ll always have the upper hand on my serve.
It gave me a weapon that other players worried about
It gave me an aura, because people knew that I could lead the race and still win, and people had thought you couldn’t do that.
It adds relentless pressure to opponents when they know you have a super strength
Other players fear you - when you believe someone fears you, you don’t fear them
It gives me a huge advantage over anyone else because nobody is winning that many points

It gives me more confidence going into matches
I had more confidence in leading my races
When I raced, I raced a lot more confidently
I felt more confident in my method going out there
It’s very simple playing to your super strengths; it’s a very big confidence thing.
It gives you more belief in yourself to go for the shots, more belief you can do it
I feel confident that I will make the right decisions around the super strengths
Knowing what works for you and that gives you the confidence to go out and race
I knew that I would always be able to deliver those super strengths
Believing I could deliver a game that could get me to the Olympics and win us a medal made a big impact on my performance

Your confidence is sky high because you know you have done everything you could do to prepare for the comp.
It’s that confidence that you’ve put the right programme together for the vision
We knew we had done the hard work, full of confidence to go and execute
I had a lot more belief after putting it into practice
It gives you confidence once you have done it, and you have seen
If I am working on my strengths in training, I am going to be building confidence
It’s the knowledge and understanding that you have shown you can produce it that gives you confidence.
Knowing that you just need to do what you have been doing gives you an untouchable confidence

It gave a lot of players a lot of confidence in our team
I could see that everyone had the confidence that they would just do their job.
We believe that our team has that extra edge
I didn’t doubt at any point that we would win as we all knew what each of us was going to deliver
Even when losing we still have this confidence that if we bring our super strengths out we will win.
As a team it gives you inner confidence, there is no doubt about it.
Standing up and telling each other what it was we brought to the team created a real confident environment and a real energy.

Lower Order Themes

Self-belief

Others’ belief

Positive focus

Confidence

Edge on others

Competition confidence

Preparation

Team confidence
**PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH**

**Raw Data Themes**

I think there was a shift in emphasis from weaknesses to strengths
It changes where you look for improvement
It is different to the traditional way of always looking at weaknesses to get better
Traditionally we always worked on weaknesses, this was different
I think it is quite rare in sport for coaches to tell you that you are really good at this
Working on my super strength was a big change from what I was used to
It was a first for me, working on weaknesses not being the focus
It changed what I think about what we look at when trying to improve
It wasn’t like what I had done before
It’s very good as it gives you a new way of thinking

I am much more focused when playing games in training
It gives you more of a focus and purpose in training
You go out to training with areas you want to focus on around your super strengths
It gives you structure to your practice
There was a clear focus in training to implement my strengths in the session
It gives you a plan to work on in training

It provides a simple strong message which is what a team needs
It can give you a clear method for performing
It helps you really establish your method for performance
It is about clear messages, clear goals and focusing
It provides a much clearer methodology about how you score your runs
It gave me a real focused game plan of what I set out to do in a match
It helps you just focus on one or a couple of things when performing
It gives you a way of focusing your game on something
It is your thing you bring to the team so you feel part of the cog in the wheel.
Everyone has a super strength and so everyone has a part to play.

It’s like a blueprint and as a team you always go back to it
It was something I could always refer to
It was something I could fall back on when the pressure was mounting
It’s very easy to keep referring back to your super-strengths in performance
Whether it’s going good or bad you can always go back to your super strengths.
It’s something to fall back on even if your game isn’t going so well
If you are having a tough time or a poor bit of form you can always go back there

You know where you are going once you have a super strength to work on
Immediately it gives you focus and direction
I think it gives me a focus
It gives you a target, as in something you can always work towards no matter what
It gives you much more clarity than trying to improve on lots of things
It made me practice more, deliberately thinking of my way to succeed
There was a real mental shift trying to be a bit more proactive on the court
I think it just gives you a clear focus, knowing what you are going to work on.
It gives you focus and direction for improving

**Lower Order Themes**

**Higher Order themes**

Mind-set shift

Training focus

Strategy for competition

Default method

Clarity of purpose

Goal direction
PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH

Raw Data Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Order Themes</th>
<th>Higher Order themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think it changes your mind-set to keep pushing throughout</td>
<td>Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt so inspired with this new idea.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It gives you a bit more of a ‘get up and go’ sort of feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>It makes you think it’s worth giving it a go</td>
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<tr>
<td>It makes you excited to go train the things you are good at.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would be more inclined to make myself pretty tired in training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives you a good reason to go out when it’s freezing!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A strength is usually something you enjoy, so it’s more fun to work on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassurance from coach about your super strength before the day means you can get excited to perform</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping with pressure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It gives you something good to focus on when you’re having a bad day</td>
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<tr>
<td>When the pressure is on this gives you that focus and with that your performance improves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It actually takes a bit of pressure off knowing they don’t want you to be perfect at everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think you just feel freer because you are not worried about making mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t worry so much on the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>It positively changes your expectations in the times you aren’t doing well</td>
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<th>Reliance (Negative)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The only danger is that because something has worked you say like OK well let’s just do that all the time!</td>
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<tr>
<td>I came a bit of a one trick pony because I tried to do it every time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s about working out when this works for you, otherwise you can become a bit obsessed on it</td>
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<tr>
<td>It has to complement the other stuff you’re doing, it’s not the only thing you do</td>
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<tr>
<td>The danger in a team is that sometimes you might rely on an individual to bring their super strength</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you struggle to get my super strength out, you might race a bit more negatively</td>
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<th>Performance Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I got so fit so I could get to the front and then I had an opportunity to medal</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have had our best outcomes since working in this way</td>
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<tr>
<td>I won my first world cup event this year which was a while after we had started doing this</td>
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<tr>
<td>It made me the best player in the world for a while</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s what I am better than others at and it gives me a better chance to win.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am playing better and at the highest level more often, not dipping like I would before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance wise I got stronger using my super-strengths</td>
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</table>

Figure 1. Higher-order, lower-order and raw data themes representing athletes’ perceptions of the effects of the super-strengths approach.